

THE IRELAND MEDAL – Part 2 THE EVOLUTION OF A MEDAL (2014 – 2019)

by John Connolly, Honorary Secretary

Introduction

The Ireland Medal – Part 1 was published in *LSARS Journal* No.98 and contained details of the original Ireland Medal and its first eleven recipients (2003–2013). This paper describes the introduction of a new version of the medal, its sponsor's lifesaving story, medal recipients twelve to eighteen (2014 - 2019), and a new direction for the Lifesaving Foundation and its prestigious medal.

The Ireland Medal (2004)

The Ireland Medal was introduced in 2004 as a joint project between the Irish Lifesaving Foundation (now The Lifesaving Foundation) and The Royal Life Saving Society's Republic of Ireland Branch (RLSS IRELAND) to mark the centenary of RLSS lifesaving in Ireland and the incorporation of The Irish Lifesaving Foundation (now The Lifesaving Foundation) as a legally independent charity. Originally, it was intended as a rescue medal, with long exceptional meritorious service as a secondary fallback option, but after the first medal was awarded to An Garda Síochána, it was never again awarded as such. This was due to the identified difficulty of distinguishing between the comparative merits of a reckless act of bravery and that of a calculated safe land based rescue. After the third medal, the link with RLSS IRELAND was broken and the criteria was formally changed by the Foundation Board *'to an Irish person or organization or to a person of Irish descent in recognition of a long exceptional contribution to saving lives from drowning'*. The medal has obtained a high status within the world lifesaving community due primarily to the quality of its recipients.

The 'New' Ireland Medal

Having presented all eleven copies of the original medal a new revised medal was introduced in 2014.

Speaking at the new medal handover ceremony, on 10th October 2015 in New Ross Boat Club, Foundation Secretary John Connolly said,

"By 2014 we had run out of original medals to present and discussed seeking a sponsor for a new stock of medals. We did not want to commercialise the award and in truth were stuck for a solution. Then I received an e-mail from John Walsh asking if his grandfather James Hogan was eligible for the medal. In his lifetime his grandfather James had rescued over 30 persons from drowning, but he was long dead. John sent me a lot of background documentation showing that James, along with his brothers John and Thomas, had rescued over 50 persons from drowning in the River Barrow as it flows through New Ross. Sadly, I informed John that were his grandfather alive we would have been proud to engrave his name onto the back of an Ireland Medal. Then I had a thought, a curious thought. We could not engrave James Hogan's name onto the back of one medal but, if his family was willing to sponsor the new medal, we could engrave his name onto the back of every medal."

The purchase of the new medals was sponsored by the Hogan family, from New Ross, County Wexford, Ireland, in memory of three deceased lifesaver brothers Thomas, James, and John Hogan. Between them the three brothers had rescued over 50 persons from drowning in the River Barrow in the first half of the 20th century.

The Medal – Type 2



Ireland Medal (Type 2) obverse

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| <i>Obverse</i> | Image of a swimming rescue between 'IRELAND' and 'MEDAL'. 'THE LIFESAVING FOUNDATION' around the top circumference and 'EXCEPTIONAL LIFE SAVING' around the bottom circumference. |
| <i>Reverse</i> | 'IN MEMORY OF' around the top circumference and 'JAMES HOGAN' around the bottom circumference. Engraved in 5mm capitals. |
| <i>Dimensions</i> | 50mm diameter, 4mm thick |
| <i>Composition</i> | Gilded base metal |
| <i>Naming</i> | Year of award followed by the recipient's name engraved on the reverse within the centre space. The size of the engraved details was dependent on the number of letters in a name |
| <i>Designer</i> | Lee Brothers, Dublin |
| <i>Manufacturer</i> | Lee Brothers, Dublin |
| <i>Case</i> | The medal in a blue baize interior of a navy blue presentation case, (110 x 90 x 30mm, with the Foundation logo on card inside the top cover. |

Notes:

1. The obverse of the new medal had two changes; IRISH LIFESAVING FOUNDATION was changed to THE LIFESAVING FOUNDATION in line with the charity's name change and RLSS IRELAND (the first sponsor) was removed and replaced with the words 'EXCEPTIONAL LIFESAVING'.
2. It was agreed with the Hogan family that all three brothers would be mentioned in documents and during medal ceremony presentations, but only James' name would appear on the medal as he had by far performed the greater number of rescues.
3. Twenty five copies of the medal were purchased. Four medals (inscribed SAMPLE) were presented to the Hogan family for distribution to family members worldwide, one medal was designated for display purposes, and twenty available for presentation.



Ireland Medal (Type 2) – in Presentation Box

Medal Criteria

The introduction of the new version medal was accompanied by small changes and clarifications to the award criteria. The key criteria of proven Irish ancestry and a long exceptional contribution to saving lives remained. The length of contribution was clarified as more than 25 years. A recipient must be alive when the award is publicised and an 'exceptional contribution' has to be more than just working in an administrative role or roles for a long time, i.e. it is not a service award. It was recognised that there is a gender imbalance in medals awarded but it was decided that a quota system would not be introduced as this would possibly devalue the award for future female recipients.

International Ireland Medal

Some excellent nominated candidates have been unsuccessful due to them not having proven Irish ancestry. It was decided to put aside the Irish ancestry criterion every three years and to award what would be called an 'International Ireland Medal'. It was understood that a nominated candidate for this award must have made a significant contribution to lifesaving in Ireland. There would be no change to the medal i.e. a new medal would not be purchased for international medal recipients but in award documents the award would be described as the International Ireland Medal. Two such medals have been awarded; to John Long in 2015 and to Joost Bierens in 2018. The next International Ireland Medal will be awarded in 2021.

Multiple Awards and Presentations

When the medal was introduced in 2003 it was agreed by the Foundation and RLSS that more than one medal could be awarded in one year. A medal could be awarded to an individual and another to an organisation. It was not intended for this to happen and was just covering the possibility should an occasion arise. Early on joint presentation ceremonies had been held. The 2006 medal presentation to Eamonn Doherty and the 2007 medal to Foyle Search and Rescue had been presented during the one medal ceremony in Waterford City. The 2008 medal presentation to Terence Higgins and 2009 medal to Dublin Fire Brigade had taken place in the Fire Brigade Training Centre during the same ceremony. At the time these were done for economic reasons during a recession. Those, however, were joint medal ceremonies and not multiple single year awards. It was felt afterwards that having more than one medal recipient at a ceremony diluted the attention on both recipients. The 2007 medal had been awarded to Foyle Search and Rescue to highlight that suicidal drownings could be prevented and the 2009 medal to Dublin Fire Brigade to highlight that in Ireland fire services rescue more persons from drowning than from fires. Each aspect of drowning prevention was important enough to deserve separate attention and it was decided to end joint medal ceremonies.

In 2016 there were two strong competing medal recipients, Brendan Donohoe and Ireland's Naval Service. Brendan was celebrating 50 continuous years of lifesaving in 2016 and the Naval Service the rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean. It was thought that if one award was postponed until 2017 the moment would have passed. The Foundation Board decided to consult with former individual medal recipients on the matter without identifying those concerned. Their recommendation was that the option of awarding two medals in one year be exercised but that there would be two separate medal ceremonies. The Foundation Board agreed to this arrangement.

Ireland Medal Parchments

The presentation of framed parchments with the Ireland Medal continued with some minor changes. To facilitate the easier transportation of framed parchments in suitcases the size was reduced from size A2 to A3. Colour printed images replaced images previously drawn in gold. Concern had been expressed about the sharpness quality of the gold images. With the introduction of colour printing it was decided to reproduce printed logos of organisations associated with a medal recipient in the corners of a parchment. The hand printing of faces onto the blank parchment remained, as a reminder that all drowning statistics refer to real people. However, if a medal recipient wished it, the faces would be omitted. The parchments are inscribed with the recipient's titles, name and post-nominals as before.



Medal Parchment awarded to Brendan Donohoe (Note: the background faces have been omitted)

The parchment has now been replaced by a large Waterford Crystal Trophy which can be chosen by the recipient. This arose from the retirement of the calligrapher and the moving of all Foundation activities to Waterford to strengthen the research relationship with WIT. The Foundation values this new relationship with Waterford Crystal.

Professor Bierens was the last person to receive the Medal Parchment.

Medal Citations**2014 - Dr. Kevin Moran ONZM, PhD - (New Zealand & United Kingdom)**

Dr Kevin Moran ONZM PhD from New Zealand the 2014 Ireland Medal recipient.

Dr Kevin Moran ONZM PhD has displayed long outstanding leadership and dedication to water safety and lifesaving involving his membership of International Life Saving's Research and Information Committee; co-chairing the International Task Force on Open Water Drowning Prevention; he was a founding member of the New Zealand Drowning Prevention Council and WaterSafe Auckland, which he chaired for a number of years. He has been a frontline surf lifeguard for almost 50 years. Currently he is a Principal Lecturer in Health and Physical Education in the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland. His doctoral thesis is titled Re-thinking drowning risk: the role of water safety knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in the aquatic recreation of New Zealand youth. Recent publications include studies on toddler parent perceptions of CPR and drowning prevention, parental supervision of children at beaches, lifeguard CPR knowledge and beliefs, rock fisher water safety,

defining swimming ability in the context of drowning prevention, and high risk behaviours among youth around water.

2015 - International Ireland Medal - Chief Superintendent John Long - (U.K.)

Chief Superintendent John Long the first recipient of the International Ireland Medal in 2015

Chief Superintendent (Rtd) John Long has lifesaving experience from local club level to international level. Between 1957 and 1991 he was a police officer rising to the rank of Chief Superintendent. He held RLSS posts as Trainer/Assessor, Treasurer, Secretary and Chairman in two different UK Branches. He has been President of the Warwick Life Saving Club since its formation in 1982 and was Chairman of the RLSS UK West Midlands Region between 2001 and 2011. In 2013 John was appointed President of The RLSS UK Warwickshire Branch. He was Commonwealth Secretary of the RLSS from 1992 to 2010; an Observer on the Board of the International Life Saving Federation (ILS) from 1994 until 2005; and Secretary to the ILS Development Commission between 1992 and 2005. In these roles he helped to found national lifesaving organisations in a number of developing

countries. Since 2008 he has been Patron of the Rashtriya Life Saving Society of India having been one of the prime movers in the establishment of the organisation in 1999.

2016

Brendan Donohoe - (Ireland)



**Brendan Donohoe 2016
Individual Ireland Medal recipient**

Brendan Donohoe has 50 years of continuous exceptional service to saving lives from drowning as a lifeguard, a lifesaving teacher, a lifeguard trainer/assessor and as a lifesaving administrator. Joining the RLSS in the 1960's Brendan served on the Ireland Branch executive as Branch Membership Secretary, Branch Technical Officer, Branch Chief Examiner, four terms as Branch President, and be elected to the RLSS UK National Executive Board representing the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland Branches as Ireland Region member. On 20th June 2016 his RLSS Monkstown Lifesaving Club celebrated its 40th birthday. He can usually be found on Thursday nights in the Blue Pool Monkstown teaching lifesaving or training lifeguards. He was a founding member of the Irish Lifesaving Foundation and from 2010 has been Chairperson of the restructured Lifesaving Foundation. In this role he has

supported the provision of financial and technical aid to lifesaving groups in developing countries visiting Africa twice.

2016 - The Irish Naval Service - (Ireland)



Presentation of the 2016 Group Ireland Medal to Ireland's Naval Service to Commodore Hugh Scully. The photo contains four previous medal recipients Brendan Donohoe (2016 Individual medal recipient), Patricia Wilcox (2010 medal recipient), John Long (2015 international medal recipient), and John Connolly (2012 medal recipient). The medal was presented by Larry O'Brien (second from left) who is credited with saving over 30 persons when the *Herald of Free Enterprise* sank.

The 2016 Group Ireland Medal was awarded to The Irish Naval Service in recognition of its permanent role as on-scene coordinator in deep sea Search and Rescue (SAR) lifesaving operations and its recent humanitarian rescuer role in the Mediterranean Sea. The Irish Government decided to send naval ships to the Mediterranean as part of the European Union refugee response. In May 2015 LÉ Eithne entered the

Mediterranean and took up station off the coast of North Africa where over 8 weeks they saved 3,376 migrants. The LÉ Niamh replaced LÉ Eithne in July 2015 on a three month mission rescuing more than

4,100 people. In October 2015 LÉ Samuel Beckett replaced LÉ Eithne and by the end of 2015 over 8,000 migrants had been rescued from drowning by Irish Naval Service ships. LÉ Róisín was deployed to the Mediterranean on 01 May 2016 and rescue a total of 1,264 people. LÉ James Joyce, replaced LÉ Róisín in July with LÉ Samuel Beckett taking over at the end of September. By October 2016 over 10,000 persons had been rescued from drowning in the Mediterranean.

2017 - Dr Shayne Baker OAM, D. Prof - (Australia)



Ceann Comhairle (Speaker of Ireland's Parliament) Seán O'Fearghail (left) presenting the 2017 Ireland Medal to Dr Shayne Baker OAM.

Dr. Shayne Baker OAM has contributed long exceptional service to saving lives from drowning worldwide. He has been involved for over 30 years in all aspects of lifesaving in Australia and in the Asia/Pacific Region, from teaching basic water safety to children to leading a team of beach lifeguards. As a lifesaving administrator he has served as Royal Life Saving Society Australia National President (2003–2009) and is currently serving a four year term as Commissioner of the International Life Saving Federation's Rescue Commission. In his home Queensland City of Toowoomba Shayne is the leader of a team of dedicated aquatic professionals facilitating an annual summer lifesaving programme for older children. For 20 years he worked as a volunteer lifeguard initially with Neptune RLSC and currently as a member of Miami Surf Life Saving Club on Australia's Gold Coast.

2018 - International Ireland Medal - Professor Joost Bierens MD, PhD, MCPM - (The Netherlands)



Professor Joost Bierens MD, PhD second International Ireland Medal recipient in 2018.

Professor Joost Bierens of the Netherlands has been involved in aquatic safety as a lifeguard, key member of major organizations, author, researcher, academic professor, congress chairman and international facilitator. His name is linked with some of the contemporary greatest achievements in the history of world lifesaving. His first experience with water safety was working as a beach lifeguard during medical school vacations, from 1974 to 1980, when he became interested in drowning, other aquatic emergencies, and water safety. It was during this time that he finished his first epidemiological study: "Drowning along the Dutch Beaches". He continued drowning related research while he was a resident in anaesthesiology from 1984 to 1989 in emergency medicine. In 1996, he completed his PhD thesis: "Drowning in the Netherlands, Pathophysiology, Epidemiology and Clinical Studies"

which was later published as a book. Inspired by the observation that very little had improved since his lifeguard period, he coordinated, on behalf of the Koninklijke

Maatschappij tot Redding van Drenkelingen (The Royal Society to Rescue People from Drowning, established in 1767) the multi-disciplinary, international and interactive World Congress on Drowning from 1996 to 2002. He was the coordinating editor of the standard work on drowning, "The Handbook on Drowning, Prevention, Rescue and Treatment" (2006), in which contained papers from 179 contributors from over 40 countries and its successor 'Drowning' in 2014. This is considered to be the "Bible" of water safety. He has published over 130 scientific peer-reviewed articles and chapters on lifeguarding, drowning, hypothermia and water safety.

2019 - Professor Michael Tipton MBE, PhD - (United Kingdom)



**Professor Michael Tipton MBE,
PhD 2019 medal recipient.**

In recognition of a long exceptional contribution to saving lives from drowning worldwide as a survival researcher, author, officer of the Surf Life Saving Association, member of RNLI's Medical & Survival Committee, and many other organisations Professor Michael Tipton MBE is awarded the 2019 Ireland Medal. He has had a long involvement in saving lives from drowning worldwide. In addition to his survival research Mike is a Trustee and Director of Surf Life Saving GB (SLSGB) and recently completed 10 years on the Royal National Lifeboat Institution's (RNLI) Medical & Survival Committee and is a member of the Council of RNLI. He provides technical input on the physiological responses associated with immersion-related deaths and the prevention, rescue, and treatment of immersion casualties. In recognition of his contribution to SLSGB, he was awarded life membership earlier this year. He was made Honorary Life Member of the International Association for Safety & Survival Training in 2004. Mike is also a member of the medical committee of the Society for Anhidrotic Ectodermal Dysplasia; a member of the Maritime Coastguard Agency's Immersion Casualty Review panel; and a co-founder of the International Drowning Researcher's Alliance.

Professor Tipton chose a large salad bowl, as his Waterford Crystal Trophy, being the first to exercise this option since the Medal Parchment was discontinued.

In Memoria

Two individual medal recipients are deceased. Eamonn Doherty died in 2010 and Frank Golden in 2014. Both had met in Waterford in 2008. They were recipients of many honours, but a feature of their obituaries was a mention by their families that they had been very pleased to receive Ireland Medals as recognition in Ireland for their work. Both were catholic and it was significant that during their funeral masses their Ireland Medals were placed on their coffins.

Ireland Medal recipients have become an informal brotherhood and sisterhood. All medal recipients are invited to attend medal ceremonies and where they cannot do so to send a message of congratulations to the new medal recipient. It was decided to establish memorial funds in the names of Eamonn and Frank. The funds are The Garda Commissioner Eamonn Doherty Police Drowning Research Fund (which promotes research into police involvement in drowning rescue) and The Surgeon Admiral Frank Golden Student Research Grant Fund (which provides grants to students to present research at international conferences). The families of the deceased recipients are involved in all medal activities and contribute to the memorial funds.

The Future

The Lifesaving Foundation has established a drowning research partnership with the university level college Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) in Ireland. The first joint project was an investigation of the impact of drowning deaths on local communities. As part of the partnership the Foundation is assembling a drowning research library within the Institute's Luke Wadding Library. Access is open on-line to lifesaving researchers worldwide. It is called The Lifesaving Foundation Collection. Included in the Collection is a full set of printed copies of the Life Saving Awards Research Society journal.

The Professor Joost Bierens medal ceremony in 2019 had been followed by a seminar on Suicide by Drowning. The seminar was audio recorded and made available to Foundation members. Professor Bierens had presented on 'The History of Drowning Resuscitation' in WIT at the launch of the research partnership. In 2020 on the morning after his medal ceremony Professor Michael Tipton had formally delivered the first Visiting Professor lecture on 'The Cause of the Cause of Drowning' in WIT. The event was filmed, and the film is freely available on-line. The Foundation Board has decided that this will be part of future medal events. It will not limit medal recipients to professors as the list of medal recipients currently contains four professors who can assume the Visiting Professor role with the medal recipient making a separate presentation.

It was decided to extend the medal ceremony into a two day event with a research seminar on Day One, the medal ceremony on Night One, and a Visiting Professor lecture in WIT on Day Two.

Conclusion

A medal introduced as a publicity event has unintentionally become a major international lifesaving award and a driver of drowning research. A measure of its status is the calibre of those invited to present the medal. These have included Ireland's Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Ireland's military Chief of Staff, the Chief Justice, the Ceann Comhairle (Speaker of Ireland's parliament), Government Ministers, a number of Garda Commissioners, and Naval Service Flag Officers. Previous medal recipients often attend medal ceremonies thereby strengthening the brotherhood and sisterhood of medal recipients which will ensure that the medal's future is secure.



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